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ABSTRACT

Essential job competencies for curriculum materials center directors in teacher-education institutions were identified and analyzed through a questionnaire survey of 183 current center directors and 100 educators in the fields of educational media and technology, library and information science, or educational curriculum. Also investigated were the specific tasks performed by the directors and the characteristics of the curriculum materials centers and their directors in teacher-education institutions. Two questionnaires listed 93 tasks related to organizing management, personnel management, materials selection and evaluation, technical service, design and development, production, utilization and consultation, instruction, research, and leadership and professionalism. Directors rated each task according to importance and frequency, while educators rated tasks in order of importance and suggested job competencies for center directors. Based on 153 responses from the directors and 86 from the educators, 38 competencies were identified as representing a set of common qualifications for center directors. Findings indicated that common characteristics of centers were difficult to identify. Seven references are listed. (LMM)

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COMPETENCIES OF CURRICULUM MATERIALS CENTER DIRECTORS IN TEACHER-EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

by May Lein Ho

PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

The social and economic changes of the 20th century have had a profound impact upon school curriculum and methodology. Greater professional responsibilities have been placed on the classroom teacher, one of which is the ability to integrate into a learning situation carefully selected instructional materials. Such competencies as finding, evaluating, selecting, utilizing, and re-evaluating curriculum materials and activities are considered to be the fundamental prerequisites of a potential teacher.

To make certain that the classroom teachers have developed these desired knowledge, skills, and understanding in the program of professional education, it is essential for those who are responsible for the education of teachers to provide the prospective teachers with quick and easy access to all types of instructional materials. Arnett (1965:3) suggested:

> Only as the pre-service educational period provides him with these materials as he prepares his various assignments of his instructional planning, can he learn to find the ones he might use, to evaluate them as to their potentiality in the educative process, to select what will be proper for his pupils, to utilize them so that they manifest their full potentialities, and finally to re-evaluate them for future use or, even, for future rejection.

The idea of having a collection of textbooks, samples of curriculum guides, research and teaching units, lesson plans, and audiovisual materials set aside emerged as early as in the 1920's (Kerr, 1979:5). For many years, "curriculum laboratory" was used as a standard term to identify this type of facility. In recent years, many names have appeared including curriculum center, curriculum library, curriculum materials center,

educational materials center, and learning resources center, to name but a few (Povsic and Junion, 1983:3). In this study, the term generally used was "curriculum materials center" and the professional directly in charge of the center was entitled "director."

The importance and justification of curriculum materials centers was recognized by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in the 1960's (Kerr, 1979:6). Since then, the curriculum materials center has been one of the criteria for certification of the teacher education program in schools of education. Section 5.2 of the 1979 NCATE Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Education stated that appropriate materials and instructional media should be provided and that a materials and instructional media center for teacher education should be maintained either as a part of the library or as one or more separate units to support the teacher educational program (NCATE, 1979:10).

Despite the fact that curriculum materials centers are justified as one of the requirements for accreditation of a college of teacher education, and most colleges and universities have curriculum materials in specialized collections, there are still no standards or guidelines set specially for them, nor are there criteria which are met by all (Kerr, 1979:10). The curriculum materials center has long been directed on a trial-and-error basis, with tremendous variation in priorities among different universities (Houlihan, 1978:363). In terms of the staffing, there is not only ambiguity regarding the leadership role of the staff, but there are also differences of opinions as to the competencies and skills which the staff should possess (James, 1963:101). Several studies revealed that no standardized pattern has been stated in the way they are employed, their qualifications, and the number of hours their services are available

in the center (Bhattarai, 1972:58). NCATE (1979:24), in the Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, simply suggested that the center should be directed by personnel who are knowledgeable about instructional media and materials.

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze job competencies deemed essential for a curriculum materials center director in teacher-education institutions as perceived by selected current curriculum materials center directors and a specified group of educators. The extent to which specific tasks were performed by the curriculum materials center directors was investigated. In addition, this study described the characteristics of the curriculum materials centers and their directors in teacher-education institutions.

By identifying the tasks that a curriculum materials center director frequently performed and the job competencies essential for the director, this study would provide guidance to the administration of teacher-education institutions when recruiting a person in charge of the center. Current curriculum materials center directors might utilize the results of the study to identify areas of need for continuing education and professional growth. Library media educators might find this study useful while designing or revising curricula to educate prospective administrative personnel with a goal that teacher-education institutions will offer better curriculum materials programs to meet the needs of faculty and students.

PROCEDURE

Two questionnaires were developed, one of which was designed for curriculum materials center directors; the other was designed for a group of educators related to the fields of educational media and technology, library and information science, or curriculum. Each questionnaire

contained a list of 93 tasks. The 93 tasks were grouped into the following 10 categories: (1) Organization Management, (2) Personnel Management, (3) Materials Selection and Evaluation, (4) Technical Service, (5) Design and Development, (6) Production, (7) Utilization and Consultation, (8) Instruction, (9) Research, and (10) Leadership and Professionalism. Curriculum materials center directors were instructed to rate each task according to an Importance Scale and a Frequency Scale. Rating scale values of the Importance Scale were: (1) Not Important, (2) Somewhat Important, (3) Moderately Important, and (4) Very Important. The respondents expressed their opinions regarding how important it was for a curriculum materials center director to be competent in performing a specific task. In order to investigate the degree of frequency a specific task was performed by a director, the participating directors were requested to rate each task on the Frequency Scale. The scale values were assigned as follows: (1) Never, (2) Seldom, (3) Occasionally, and (4) Frequently. Instead of rating both scales, the professional educators were asked to weigh each task only under the Importance Scale and reveal their perceptions of job competencies that a curriculum materials center director should possess.

During the fall of 1983, the questionnaires were sent to 183 curriculum materials center directors in teacher-education institutions and 100 selected professional educators throughout the United States. Eighty-six questionnaires were returned by the educators, 81 (81 percent) of which could be used for data analysis. Of the 153 returns from the directors, 114 (62.30 percent) responded to all items in the instrument.

Returned questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed to answer the 7 questions posed in the study. Distribution frequencies and percentages of

responses were utilized to determine personal and professional characteristics of the respondents and current status of the responding curriculum materials centers. In analyzing the 93 tasks, frequencies and percentages of the alternatives for each task were calculated and the mean rating of each item was computed. Items that received the highest rating from at least 51 percent of the respondents were reported. Rank order of tasks within each category and rank order of all tasks were obtained by utilizing item means. In order to determine, what, if any, statistically significant differences existed between the professional educators and curriculum materials center directors in emphasis placed upon individual competency and on various categories of competencies, a one-way analysis of variance design with .05 level of significance was applied to analyze the data.

FINDINGS

Analysis of data resulted in the following findings. For purpose of clarity, the findings were grouped into the following sections: (1) personal information concerning curriculum materials center directors, (2) information related to curriculum materials centers, (3) frequency of tasks performed by the directors, (4) importance of job competencies as perceived by the educators and the directors, and (5) differences of the two groups in emphasis on job competencies.

Personal Information Concerning Curriculum Materials Center Directors

One hundred eighteen directors responded to questions related to personal and professional characteristics of the directors, the following results were indicated:

1. The majority of the directors were female. Of the 118

respondents, 85 (72.03 percent) were women.

2. The greatest number of directors surveyed were from 31 to 40 years of age. The second largest age group was from 51 to 60 years of age.

3. There was considerable variation in titles assigned to persons in charge of curriculum materials facilities. Forty-nine titles were mentioned, 15 of which were used at least twice. The most commonly used title was director.

4. The majority of the directors were Caucasian in ethnicity. Of the 118 directors, 104 were in this category.

5. Of the 118 directors, 107 (90.68 percent) were at or beyond the master's level. A master's degree was the highest earned degree for 80 (67.80 percent) directors.

6. The responding directors indicated a wide variety of undergraduate major and minor fields of study. The most prominent master's major among 83 responses was Library Science. Most of the directors with doctoral degrees were in Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Technology, and Educational Administration and Supervision.

7. In terms of professional preparation, a significantly large number of directors had library science preparation. Of the 118 participating directors, 80 had more than 27 semester hours of library science preparation.

8. Nearly 30 percent of the directors had no more than 3 years of experience as a curriculum materials center director. On the other hand, slightly more than one-third of the directors had more than 10 years of experience as a curriculum materials center director.

9. Participating directors indicated that they had more work experiences at the higher education level than at any other level. More

than one-half of the directors had other library experience than curriculum materials center director experience.

10. The most prominent professional organization that directors joined was the state affiliate of the American Library Association.

Information Related to Curriculum Materials Centers

After data concerning the curriculum materials centers in teacher-education institutions were analyzed, the following findings were obtained:

1. The greatest number of institutions surveyed had student enrollments of 5,001 to 10,000.

2. Terms used to describe the participating curriculum materials facilities did not have uniformity. The term used most frequently was curriculum materials center.

3. More than one-half of the directors held full-time positions in curriculum materials centers.

4. The majority of the responding curriculum materials centers were under the control of the university main libraries.

5. Great variation existed regarding supporting staff. A vast majority of the responding centers indicated part-time student assistants.

6. In terms of annual budget for purchasing materials, nearly 56 percent of the centers had budgets of no more than $7,500. Nearly 80 percent of the centers had no budget for temporary use of materials.

7. Of the 118 centers, 28 had children and/or young adult collections of 5,001 to 10,000 items. Thirty-nine centers had 1,001 to 5,000 textbooks. Fifty-four centers had curriculum guide collections of 1,001 to 5,000. Nearly 62 percent of the centers indicated no more than 5,000 items of audiovisual materials.

8. The most common production equipment installed in the centers was the copy machine.

Frequency of Tasks Performed by the Directors

Of the 93 tasks investigated in the present study, 18 were performed frequently by at least 51 percent of the responding directors. When the mean for each task was calculated, 35 tasks were found to have means in the range of "occasionally" or "frequently." Assisting teachers and students in locating needed materials was the task most frequently performed by the directors. The task performed least frequently was to sponsor student-made productions for competition at fairs or conventions. Based on rank order of the 10 functional categories, Utilization and Consultation was ranked highest, while Production was ranked lowest.

Importance of Job Competencies as Perceived by the Educators and the Directors

After data gathered from the Importance Scale were analyzed, 49 job competencies were rated as being very important by at least 51 percent of the educators, while 46 were perceived to be very important by at least 51 percent of the directors. Agreement was found on 38 competencies. The ability to plan, organize, and administer the center to reach goals was at the top of the list considered to be most important by both groups. Agreement was also found on the lowest ranked competency: to teach library media skills on demand to teachers and students. As for the categories of job competencies, Leadership & Professionalism was ranked highest, while Production was ranked lowest by both groups.

Differences of the Two Groups in Emphasis on Job Competencies

Of the 93 job competencies, one-way analysis of variance yielded a significant difference in 44 items (47.31 percent). The educators and the

directors differed most in opinions on the competency of deciding whether curriculum materials should be produced locally. The educators rated this competency higher in importance than did the directors. In comparing mean ratings assigned by both groups, only 35 competencies investigated received higher director mean ratings. Significantly more items in the categories of Design & Development, Production, and Research had higher educators' means. In the category of Technical Service, however, more competencies had higher directors' means, 11 items out of 18. In terms of differences of opinions in regard to categories of job competencies, one-way analysis of variance revealed significant differences in 7 categories except Personnel Management, Technical Service, and Utilization & Consultation. The opinions of professional educators and curriculum materials center directors varied most in the category of Production.

CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. A majority of the curriculum materials center directors were library science oriented in terms of highest degree, master's major fields of study, professional preparation, work experiences, or professional organizations in which they participated. Specialities or qualifications related to educational media and technology or curriculum apparently were not widely evident among the curriculum materials center directors or administrators of teacher-education institutions as prerequisites for this position. Consequently, certain functions that curriculum materials centers ideally could perform might not be fully fulfilled or recognized due to directors' lack of professional preparation or background in certain areas.

2. Wide diversity existed among the curriculum materials centers. Common characteristics are difficult to identify, let alone any standard pattern or uniform policy. Curriculum materials centers appear to be operated differently in every respect in order to meet the individual needs of teacher-education institutions.

3. A majority of the activities in which curriculum materials center directors were frequently engaged were still oriented toward those related to traditional library activities. The frequency of a task performed by the directors was closely associated with directors' opinions in regard to the importance of being competent in performing that task. The directors tended to place more value on activities in which they were frequently involved. Utilization and Consultation, Leadership and Professionalism, and Organization Management were among the highest ranked categories in task performance and importance rating. On the other hand, the directors were minimally involved in activities related to Design and Development, Production, or Research. Therefore, the active and leading role a curriculum materials center director can play in Design and Development, Production, or Research also was not widely accepted as being very important among the directors.

4. Even though provision of production equipment and facilities to assist faculty members or students in producing curriculum materials has been proposed for years as one of the important functions a curriculum materials center should perform, production equipment or facilities were not very popular among the participating curriculum materials centers. Different arrangements for provision of production equipment or facilities may exist in those teacher-education institutions with no production equipment or facilities installed in the curriculum materials centers.

5. There are areas of agreements between the curriculum materials center directors and professional educators in regard to the competencies considered to be very important to curriculum materials center directors. The 38 competencies that the majority of both groups considered to be very important represent a basic set of common qualifications for a curriculum materials center director that can be useful to the current directors, library media educators, and administrators of teacher-education institutions.

6. There are also areas of differences between the participating directors and educators concerning the competencies essential to curriculum materials center directors. On the one hand, the competencies that a director should possess as expressed by the professional educators represent ideal goals that may lead to betterment of the profession. On the other hand, the professional ideals may not be consistent with what actually happens in the curriculum materials centers. Discrepancies may exist between the professional ideal and the reality of the curriculum materials centers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

Results of the present study suggest a number of areas for further investigation. The following are recommended:

1. Detailed guidelines and standards for a curriculum materials center in teacher-education institutions, distinct from those for other settings, should be developed. A written statement of the requisite competencies, qualifications, and academic preparation a curriculum materials center director needs to possess should be prepared and kept up-to-date. Joint efforts to achieve this goal from such nation-wide professional organizations as the American Library Association and the

Association for Educational Communications and Technology is strongly recommended.

2. The present study excluded institutions which had a curriculum materials center but did not have a professional in charge, or which did not have a curriculum materials center as defined in this study. A national study needs to be conducted to include all the institutions accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education so that more information can be obtained concerning how curriculum materials are provided in those teacher-education institutions which arrange different access for faculty members or students to curriculum materials.

3. A need exists to conduct an in-depth study as to the organization, purposes, functions, staffing, and services of existing curriculum materials centers. Evaluative criteria should be developed so that an evaluation type of study could be conducted concerning curriculum materials centers and the competency level of curriculum materials center directors when compared to the tasks performed by the directors.

4. A study should be conducted to investigate how curriculum materials centers are used by faculty members and students. Needs of faculty members and students in regard to services and programs of curriculum materials centers also should be examined.

5. A study should be conducted to examine how production equipment and facilities are provided in the teacher-education institutions if they are not installed in the curriculum materials centers. Advantages and disadvantages of different arrangements should be investigated.

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